



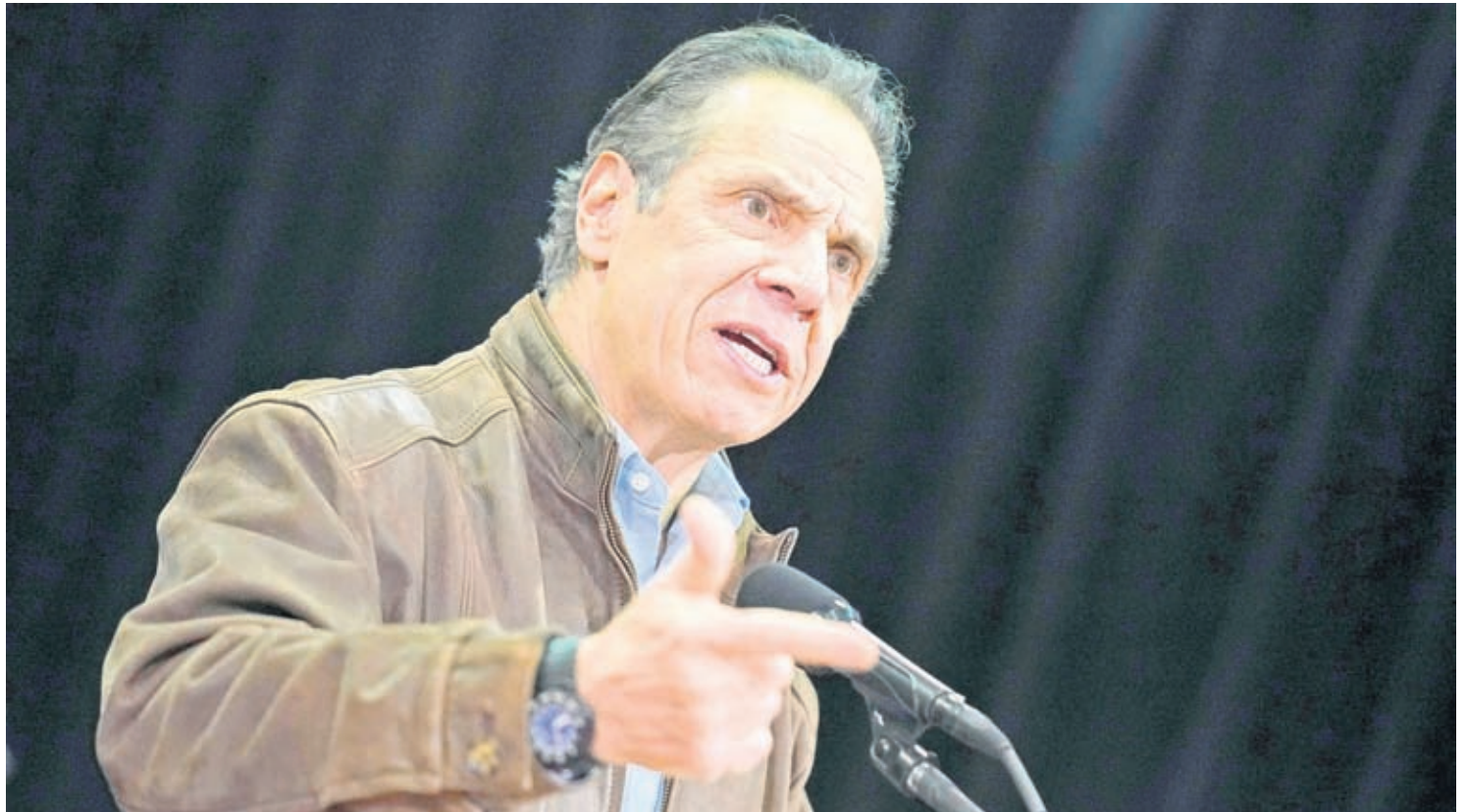
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Aruba's ONLY English newspaper

Cuomo acknowledges behavior seen as 'flirtation'

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Gov. Andrew Cuomo acknowledged for the first time Sunday that some of his behavior with women had been "misinterpreted as unwanted flirtation," and said he would cooperate with a sexual harassment investigation led by the state's attorney general. In a statement released amid mounting criticism from within his own party, the Democrat maintained he had never inappropriately touched or propositioned anyone. But he said he had teased people and made jokes about their personal lives in an attempt to be "playful."



In this Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2021, file photo, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo speaks during a press conference before the opening of a mass COVID-19 vaccination site in the Queens borough of New York. A former aide's allegations that Gov. Cuomo subjected her to an unwanted kiss during years of sexual harassment have spurred calls for an investigation — and questions about who might meaningfully conduct one.

Continued on Page 2

(AP Photo/Seth Wenig, Pool, File)



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Cuomo acknowledges behavior seen as 'flirtation'

Continued from Front

"I now understand that my interactions may have been insensitive or too personal and that some of my comments, given my position, made others feel in ways I never intended. I acknowledge some of the things I have said have been misinterpreted as an unwanted flirtation. To the extent anyone felt that way, I am truly sorry about that," he said.

He made the comments after the state's attorney general demanded Cuomo grant her the authority to investigate claims he sexually harassed at least two women who worked for him.

Cuomo's legal counsel said the governor would back a plan to appoint an outside lawyer as a special independent deputy attorney general.

Top Democrats statewide appeared to be abandoning Cuomo in large numbers as he tried to retain some say over who would investigate his workplace conduct.

Attorney General Letitia

James, a Democrat who has been, at times, allied with Cuomo but is independently elected, appeared to emerge as a consensus choice to lead a probe.

Over several hours Sunday, she and other leading party officials rejected two proposals by the governor that they said could potentially have limited the independence of the investigation. Under his first plan, announced Saturday evening, a retired federal judge picked by Cuomo, Barbara Jones, would have reviewed his workplace behavior. In the second proposal, announced Sunday morning in an attempt to appease legislative leaders, Cuomo asked James and the state's chief appeals court judge, Janet DiFiore, to jointly appoint a lawyer to investigate the claims and issue a public report. "I do not accept the governor's proposal," she said. "The state's Executive Law clearly gives my office the authority to investigate this matter once the governor provides a referral.

While I have deep respect for Chief Judge DiFiore, I

am the duly elected attorney general and it is my responsibility to carry out this task, per Executive Law. The governor must provide this referral so an independent investigation with subpoena power can be conducted."

Many of the biggest names in New York politics lined up quickly behind James.

The state legislature's two top leaders, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, both said they wanted her to handle the investigation.

New York's two U.S. senators, Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, both said an independent investigation was essential.

"These allegations are serious and deeply concerning. As requested by Attorney General James, the matter should be referred to her office so that she can conduct a transparent, independent and thorough investigation with subpoena power," Gillibrand said. White House press secretary Jen Psaki said, "There should be an independent review looking into these

allegations."

She said that's something President Joe Biden supports "and we believe should move forward as quickly as possible."

Charlotte Bennett, a low-level aide in the governor's administration until November, told The New York Times Cuomo asked inappropriate questions about her sex life, including whether she ever had sex with older men, and made other comments she

interpreted as gauging her interest in an affair.

Her accusation came days after another former aide, Lindsey Boylan, a former deputy secretary for economic development and special adviser to the governor, elaborated on harassment allegations she first made in December. Boylan said Cuomo subjected her to an unwanted kiss and inappropriate comments about her appearance. □



The Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple is seen in Los Angeles Saturday, Feb. 27, 2021. Authorities are investigating the vandalism and fire at the Buddhist temple in the Little Tokyo section of downtown Los Angeles. Authorities are investigating a vandalism and fire at a Buddhist temple in the Little Tokyo section of downtown Los Angeles. Surveillance video caught a man jumping the security fences at the Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple on Thursday night, smashing a 12-foot-high glass window with a rock, yanking a pair of metallic lanterns off their concrete bases and lighting two wooden lantern stands on fire, the temple's head priest told the Los Angeles Times.

(AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes)

LA police probe fire, vandalism at Japanese Buddhist temple

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Authorities are investigating a vandalism and fire at a Buddhist temple in the Little Tokyo section of downtown Los Angeles.

Surveillance video caught a man jumping the security fences at the Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple on Thursday night, smashing a 12-foot-high glass window with a rock, yanking a pair of metallic lanterns off their concrete bases and lighting two wooden lantern stands on fire, the temple's head priest told the Los Angeles Times.

"Your first feelings are those of disappointment and sadness to see what happened," said the Rev. Noriaki Ito. "I don't know the motives, but it looks like we were targeted. The only relief I find is that no one was hurt."

The incident comes amid a rise in hate crimes against Asian Americans. The advocacy group Stop AAPI Hate said it tracked 245 reports of coronavirus-related discrimination against people of Asian descent in Los Angeles County from March through December last year. They included verbal harassment, physical assaults or refusal of service at business.

Los Angeles Police Department Capt. Stacy Spell said it was too early to label Thursday's vandalism a hate crime because the investigation is in the early stages. □

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Supreme Court could put new limits on voting rights lawsuits

WASHINGTON (AP) — Eight years after carving the heart out of a landmark voting rights law, the Supreme Court is looking at putting new limits on efforts to combat racial discrimination in voting.

The justices are taking up a case about Arizona restrictions on ballot collection and another policy that penalizes voters who cast ballots in the wrong precinct.

The high court's consideration comes as Republican officials in the state and around the country have proposed more than 150 measures, following last year's elections, to restrict voting access that civil rights groups say would disproportionately affect Black and Hispanic voters. A broad Supreme Court ruling would make it harder to fight those efforts in court. Arguments are set for Tuesday via telephone, because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"It would be taking away one of the big tools, in fact, the main tool we have left now, to protect voters against racial discrimination," said Myrna Perez, director of the Brennan Center for Justice's voting rights and elections program.

Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich, a Republican, said the high court case is about ballot integrity, not discrimination. "This is about protecting the franchise, not disenfranchising anyone," said Brnovich, who will argue the case on Tuesday.

President Joe Biden narrowly won Arizona last year, and since 2018, the state



FILE - In this Nov. 4, 2020, file photo Maricopa County elections officials count ballots at the Maricopa County Recorder's Office in Phoenix. Eight years after carving the heart out of a landmark voting rights law, the Supreme Court is looking at putting new limits on efforts to combat racial discrimination in voting. The justices are taking up a case about Arizona restrictions on ballot collection and another policy that penalizes voters who cast ballots in the wrong precinct. (AP Photo/Matt York, File).

has elected two Democratic senators.

The justices will be reviewing an appeals court ruling against a 2016 Arizona law that limits who can return early ballots for another person and against a separate state policy of discarding ballots if a voter goes to the wrong precinct.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the ballot-collection law and the state policy discriminate against minority voters in violation of the federal Voting Rights Act and that the law also violates the Constitution.

The Voting Rights Act, first enacted in 1965, was extremely effective against discrimination at the ballot box because it forced state and local governments, with a history of discrimi-

nation, including Arizona, to get advance approval from the Justice Department or a federal court before making any changes to elections.

In 2013, the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that the portion of the law known as Section 5 could no longer be enforced because the population formula for determining which states were covered hadn't been updated to take account of racial progress.

Congress "must identify those jurisdictions to be singled out on a basis that makes sense in light of current conditions," Chief Justice John Roberts wrote for a conservative majority. "It cannot rely simply on the past."

Democrats in Congress will try again to revive the ad-

vance approval provision of the voting rights law. The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act failed in the last Congress, when Republicans controlled the Senate and President Donald Trump was in the White House.

But another part of the law, Section 2, applies nationwide and still prohibits discrimination in voting on the basis of race. Civil rights groups and voters alleging racial bias have to go to court and prove their case either by showing intentional discrimination in passing a law or that the results of the law fall most heavily on minorities.

The new Supreme Court case mainly concerns how plaintiffs can prove discrimination based on the law's results.

The arguments are taking place against the backdrop of the 2020 election, in which there was a massive increase in early voting and mailed-in ballots because of the pandemic. Trump and his Republican supporters challenged the election results by advancing claims of fraud that were broadly rejected by state and federal courts.

But many Republicans continue to question the election's outcome, despite the absence of evidence. GOP elected officials have responded by proposing to restrict early voting and mailed-in ballots, as well as toughen voter identification laws.

The challenged Arizona provisions remained in effect in 2020 because the case was still making its way through the courts.

But Brnovich said last year's voting is another reason the justices should side with the state. "I think part of the lesson of 2020 was that when people don't believe that elections have integrity or that their vote is being protected, it will lead to undermining the public's confidence in the system," Brnovich said.

Civil rights groups said the court should not use this case to make it harder to root out racial discrimination, which "still poses a unique threat to our democracy," as the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund put it in a brief. Nearly 75 businesses, including PayPal, Levi Strauss and Impossible Foods, joined in a brief urging the court to "fully preserve the Voting Rights Act." □

3 Kansas police officers injured by shotgun in vacant home

(AP) — Three Wichita, Kansas, police officers were injured by a shotgun blast when they checked out a vacant home, authorities said. Wichita Police said Sunday that "a modified, loaded shotgun" discharged as the officers entered the home around 4 p.m. Saturday. Investigators determined that no one was in the home at the time, but the homeowners had called police suspecting someone was inside after noticing that some windows were open. Police said two officers remained hospitalized

Sunday with injuries that weren't considered life-threatening. One officer was in serious but stable condition and the other was being treated for minor injuries. A third officer who was hurt was treated at a hospital Saturday and released.

Officers surrounded the home for several hours Saturday before determining that no one was inside. Police Chief Gordon Ramsay said at a news conference Saturday evening that it wasn't immediately clear whether the house

had been booby trapped before officers arrived.

Police spokesman Officer Trevor Macy told The Wichita Eagle that investigators are trying to determine whether the shotgun had been rigged to fire when the door opened.

"Apparently there were several modifications made to this one," Macy said.

Officers from the FBI and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms are helping Wichita police investigate what happened. □

Biden team readies wider economic package after virus relief

WASHINGTON (AP) —

Looking beyond the \$1.9 trillion COVID relief bill, President Joe Biden and lawmakers are laying the groundwork for another top legislative priority — a long-sought boost to the nation's roads, bridges and other infrastructure that could run into Republican resistance to a hefty price tag.

Biden and his team have begun discussions on the possible outlines of an infrastructure package with members of Congress, particularly mindful that Texas' recent struggles with power outages and water shortages after a brutal winter storm present an opportunity for agreement on sustained spending on infrastructure.

Republicans say if the White House approach on the COVID relief bill — which passed the House Saturday on a near party-line vote and now heads to the Senate — is a sign of things to come for Biden's plan on infrastructure and other initiatives, it could be a difficult road ahead in Congress.

A White House proposal could come out in March. "Now is the time to be aggressive," said Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, a former South Bend, Indiana, mayor who knows potholes.

At a conference with state and local highway officials Thursday, he referred to the often-promised, never-achieved mega-initiative on roads, bridges and the like from the Trump administration.

"I know you are among those who are working and waiting most patiently, or maybe impatiently, for the moment when Infrastructure Week will no longer be a kind of Groundhog's Day promise — but actually be something that delivers generational investments," he said.

Much of America's infrastructure — roads, bridges, public drinking and water systems, dams, airports, mass transit systems and more — is in need of major restoration after years of



FILE - In this April 16, 2020, file photo work continues on a bridge on the Interstate Highway 75 project in Troy, Mich. Looking beyond the \$1.9 trillion COVID relief bill, President Joe Biden and lawmakers are laying the groundwork for another of his top legislative priorities — a long-sought boost to the nation's roads, bridges and other infrastructure that could meet GOP resistance to a hefty price tag.

(AP Photo/Carlos Osorio, File)

underfunding, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers. In its 2017 Infrastructure Report Card, it gave the national infrastructure an overall grade of D+.

Both chambers of Congress will use as starting points their unsuccessful efforts to get infrastructure bills through the last session.

Democrats passed a \$1.5 trillion package in the House last year, but it went nowhere with the Trump administration and the Republican-led Senate. A Senate panel approved narrower bipartisan legislation in 2019 focused on reauthorizing federal transportation programs. It, too, flamed out as the U.S. turned its focus to elections and COVID-19.

Biden has talked bigger numbers, and some Democrats are now urging him to bypass Republicans in the closely divided Congress to address a broader range of priorities urged by interest groups.

During the presidential campaign, Biden pledged to deploy \$2 trillion on infrastructure and clean energy, but the White House has not ruled out an even higher price tag.

Pointing to the storm in Texas as a "wake-up call" for

the need to improve energy systems and other infrastructure, Gina McCarthy, Biden's national climate adviser, told The Associated Press that Biden's plan will specifically aim at green and other initiatives that promote job creation. She cited as an example federal investments to boost "workers that have been left behind" by closed coal mines or power plants, as well as communities located near polluting refineries and other hazards.

"He's been a long fan of investing in infrastructure — long outdated — long overdue, I should say," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Thursday. "But he also wants to do more on caregiving, help our manufacturing sector, do more to strengthen access to affordable health care. So the size — the package — the components of it, the order, that has not yet been determined."

Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, recently told the White House that he's ready to use the budget maneuver known as reconciliation to pass a broad economic recovery package with only Democratic votes. That drew stern warnings from

Republicans, who have already closed ranks against Democrats' COVID-19 relief bill.

"They made a conscious decision not to include us," said Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., on Sunday, calling the White House's assertion that the views of Republicans were taken into account with the COVID bill a "joke."

Cassidy, one of 10 centrist Republicans who met with Biden in early February about getting bipartisan support on that bill, said Biden "so far has been about rhetoric" when it comes to his pledge of seeking unity and bipartisanship. He called it worrisome for other legislative initiatives.

"Republicans remain willing and are working on issues that require bipartisan cooperation," he told CNN's "State of the Union."

West Virginia Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, a Republican who will be helping to craft legislation on the Senate side, said there's bipartisan support for ambitious steps on infrastructure. But that "should not extend to a multitrillion-dollar package that is stocked full with other ideologically driven, one-size-fits-all policies that tie the hands of our states

and our communities," said Capito, the ranking member on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

Rep. Peter DeFazio, chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, told the AP that he foresees a comprehensive House package that will go beyond roads, bridges and public transit. He also expects it to have money for water systems, broadband and the power grid — addressing a weak infrastructure laid bare after the crippling blackouts in Texas.

He's not ready to talk overall costs yet. DeFazio, D-Ore., said it will be up to the Biden administration and the House Ways and Means Committee to figure out how to pay for it.

DeFazio said General Motors' recently announced goal of going largely electric by 2035 demonstrates the need for massive spending on charging stations across the country. Biden campaigned on a plan to install 500,000 charging stations by the end of 2030.

"I'm totally willing to work with (Republicans) if they're willing to recognize climate change," DeFazio said, "or if they don't want to recognize climate change, they can just recognize that electric semis and electric vehicles are a flood on the horizon and we've got to get ahead of it."

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, D-Mich., expressed a similar sentiment, urging strong action on carbon emissions and the vehicle charging stations to help achieve a "full transition to electric." She also wants states to have more federal grants for infrastructure repairs after natural disasters and extreme weather.

At the Senate hearing where she spoke, Republican Gov. Larry Hogan of Maryland said there's bipartisan support among governors for relieving congestion, cutting red tape, leveraging private sector investment and ensuring projects can better withstand cyber attacks and natural disasters. □

UN Human Rights Office says 18 killed in Myanmar crackdown

YANGON, Myanmar (AP)

— Security forces in Myanmar opened fire and made mass arrests Sunday as they sought to break up protests against the military's seizure of power, and a U.N. human rights official said it had "credible information" that 18 people were killed and 30 were wounded. That would be the highest single-day death toll among protesters who are demanding that the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi be restored to power after being ousted by a Feb. 1 coup. About 1,000 people are believed to have been detained Sunday.

"Deaths reportedly occurred as a result of live ammunition fired into crowds in Yangon, Dawei, Mandalay, Myeik, Bago and Pokokku," the U.N. Human Rights Office said in a statement referring to several cities, adding that the forces also used tear gas, flash-bang grenades and stun grenades.

"We strongly condemn the escalating violence against protests in Myanmar and call on the military to immediately halt the use of force against peaceful protesters," its spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani was quoted saying.

An Associated Press journalist was taken into police custody on Saturday morning while providing news coverage of the protests. The journalist, Thein Zaw, remains in police custody.

The Democratic Voice of Burma reported that as of 5 p.m. in Myanmar, there had been 19 confirmed deaths in nine cities, with another 10 deaths unconfirmed. The independent media company broadcasts on satellite and digital terrestrial television, as well as online.

DVB counted five deaths in Yangon and two in Mandalay, the largest and second-largest cities.

It registered five deaths in Dawei, a much smaller city in southeastern Myanmar that has seen tens of thousands of protesters nearly every day since the coup. Witnesses said Sunday's



Protesters shout slogans as police arrive during a protest against the military coup in Mandalay, Myanmar, Sunday, Feb. 28, 2021. Police in Myanmar escalated their crackdown on demonstrators against this month's military takeover, deploying early and in force on Saturday as protesters sought to assemble in the country's two biggest cities and elsewhere.

(AP Photo)

march was also large and people were determined not to be driven off the streets.

Confirming the deaths of protesters has been difficult amid the chaos and general lack of news from official sources, especially in areas outside Yangon, Mandalay and the capital of Naypyitaw. But in many cases, photos and video circulated showed circumstances of the killings and gruesome photos of bodies.

The independent Assis-

tance Association of Political Prisoners reported it was aware that about 1,000 people were detained Sunday, of whom they were able to identify 270. That brought to 1,132 the total number of people the group has confirmed being arrested, charged or sentenced since the coup.

Gunfire was reported almost as soon the protests began Sunday morning in Yangon, as police also fired tear gas and water cannons while trying to clear the streets. Photos of

shell casings from live ammunition used in assault rifles were posted on social media. Initial reports on social media identified one young man believed to have been killed. His body was shown in photos and videos lying on a sidewalk until other protesters carried him away.

In Dawei, local media reported at least three people were killed during a protest march, supported by photos and video. Photos on social media showed one wounded man in the

care of medical personnel. Before Sunday, there had been eight confirmed reports of killings linked to the army's takeover, according to the independent Assistance Association of Political Prisoners.

The Feb. 1 coup reversed years of slow progress toward democracy after five decades of military rule. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party would have been installed for a second five-year term in office, but the army blocked Parliament from convening and detained her and President Win Myint, as well as other top members of Suu Kyi's government.

On Sunday morning, medical students marched in Yangon near the Hledan Center intersection, which has become the gathering point for protesters who then fan out to other parts of the city.

Videos and photos showed protesters running as police charged at them, and residents setting up makeshift roadblocks to slow their advance. Some protesters managed to throw tear gas canisters back at police. Nearby, residents were pleading with police to release those they picked up from the street and shoved into police trucks to be taken away. Dozens or more were believed to be detained.

"The world is watching the actions of the Myanmar military junta, and will hold them accountable," said Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director for New York-based Human Rights Watch. "Live ammunition should not be used to control or disperse protests and lethal force can only be used to protect life or prevent serious injury."

Security forces began employing rougher tactics on Saturday, taking preemptive actions to break up protests and making scores, if not hundreds, of arrests. Greater numbers of soldiers also joined police. Many of those detained were taken to Insein Prison in Yangon's northern outskirts, historically notorious for holding political prisoners. □



In this image from a video, medics attend to a man in a street in Dawei, Myanmar Sunday, Feb. 28, 2021. The man appeared to be a wound in his upper chest. Medics held an oxygen mask to his face while calling out for an ambulance.

(Dakkhina Insight via AP)

El Salvador vote could strengthen president's rule



FILE - In this Feb. 17, 2021 file photo, Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele speaks before the start of vaccination of medical staff with the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine at the Atlacatl Medical Unit of the Salvadoran Social Security Institute in San Salvador, El Salvador. Since Bukele was elected, the hold that the opposition maintains on congress has been a point of constant frustration for the young president, but that could change on Feb. 28, 2021, when voters go to the polls in local and legislative elections that observers and surveys suggest could remake the country's political landscape.

(AP Photo/Salvador Melendez, File)

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (AP) — Sunday's legislative and local elections in El Salvador are seen as a referendum on whether to break the congressional deadlock that has tied the hands of upstart populist President Nayib Bukele. El Salvador's established political parties — the conservative National Republican Alliance party and the leftist Farabundo Marti Liberation Front — are trying to retain their hold on congress and other key posi-

tions, which has continued since the end of the country's civil war in 1992. Anger with the parties that ruled El Salvador for nearly three decades swept the youthful Bukele into office in 2019, and frustration remains. "I've come to vote for a change, to get rid of the corrupt ones and so our president can make a new country," said Estela Jiménez, who arrived early at a polling place wearing a T-shirt with an "N" for Nayib.

Bukele, 39, has blamed congress for blocking his efforts in everything from controlling crime to managing the coronavirus pandemic. His New Ideas party was favored in polls to pick up congressional seats and municipal councils. While popular with voters tired of the scandals associated with the two old-guard parties, Bukele has shown an authoritarian streak. Two years ago, Bukele sent heavily armed soldiers to surround the

congress during a standoff over security funding, earning rebukes internationally. Bukele's party complained Sunday that the country's electoral tribunal had not issued the ID cards needed for the party's poll watchers to participate.

"This always happens. Now they say there are problems because the Supreme Electoral Council hasn't allowed the New Ideas people in. I hope they solve this so I can vote, I'm not going to leave here without voting," said Esteban Castellón, who was among the first in line to vote at a polling place in San Salvador, the capital. A total of 5.3 million eligible voters were electing all 84 seats in the unicameral Legislative Assembly, along with 262 municipal councils. Most polling places opened at 7:00 a.m., though some were delayed by as much as an hour, and will close at 5:00 p.m. (2300 GMT).

The conservative party known as ARENA currently holds 37 of the 84 seats in congress and controls 138 of the 262 municipal councils, while the leftist FMLN holds 23 congressional seats and 64 townships. With a majority in the Legislative Assembly, Bukele's party would not only be able to advance the president's agenda, but also name justices to the Supreme Court — another Bukele obstacle — as well as magistrates to the Su-

preme Electoral Tribunal, the attorney general, the prosecutor for the defense of human rights and others. Essentially his party could replace his loudest critics.

Eduardo Escobar, executive director of the non-governmental organization Citizen Action, said that if New Ideas wins a congressional majority, El Salvador would lose "that brake on the exercise of power from the legislature when legality or constitutionality is exceeded, (and) that brakes any attempted abuse, any arbitrary act that the executive wants to commit."

"It would deepen the authoritarianism of the government Bukele leads," Escobar said, though he acknowledged that Bukele's popularity remains at stratospheric levels and the rejection of the traditional parties is nearly as high.

New Ideas' popularity is because "in the 30 years of government under these parties, the people have not seen improvements in their lives," said Escobar.

In statements before polls closed, Bukele upped the stakes by calling on those who hadn't voted yet to participate in "Operation remate," literally, "to finish them off."

"I like to call it 'Operation remate,' the country has decided to end the post-war era, but there is more to do," Bukele said. "Let's make this an overwhelming victory." □

Some upset in Cyprus over 'satanic' Eurovision song choice

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — A man has been charged with uttering threats and causing a disturbance after barging onto the grounds of Cyprus' public broadcaster to protest what he said was the country's "blasphemous" entry into this year's Eurovision song contest, police said Sunday.

Police told The Associated Press the man, who hasn't been named, was released after being charged with four counts, including being verbally abusive.

Police said witnesses to Saturday's incident told investigators the man verbally accosted employees outside the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation's news department. He was apparently upset that the broadcaster had selected the song "El Diablo" ("The Devil") performed by Greek singer Elena Tsagrinou to

represent Cyprus, since he said it was as an affront to Christianity. Amateur video of the man confronting CyBC staff showed him screaming at a number of employees in the yard, asking how they could justify supporting such a song. The title of "El Diablo" as well as its lyrics — "I gave my heart to el diablo...because he tells me I'm his angel" — have touched a raw nerve with some in the east Mediterranean island nation, who consider it to be fraught with Satanic connotations.

According to the Cyprus News Agency, an association representing theologians who teach in high schools expressed their "disgust" over the song and called for it to be withdrawn because it "pledges life-long devotion and professes love for Satan."

The agency also reported the broadcaster re-

ceived threatening phone calls that "it would be burned down" because of the song.

The far-right ELAM political party issued a statement saying even if the song's lyrics are metaphorical, it "attacks and insults our faith in a shadowy way."

Others, meanwhile, took to social media to heap scorn on "El Diablo" as a good song, defend it as simply a ditty about a "scorching love affair" or to label its detractors religious zealots.

Cyprus' best-ever showing in the popular music competition was as runner-up in 2018 with the song "El Fuego" by singer Eleni Foureira.

The annual Eurovision contest is a beloved European institution watched by millions that often involves songs that are controversial, in questionable taste or just plain bad. □

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Israel approves plan to vaccinate West Bank laborers

(AP) - Israel on Sunday announced plans to vaccinate tens of thousands of Palestinians who work inside Israel and its West Bank settlements, at a time of vast disparities in access to vaccines between the Israeli and Palestinian populations. Israel has launched one of the world's most successful vaccination programs, inoculating over half of its population in just two months. But it has come under international criticism for not sharing its vaccine stockpile with the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, even as it plans to share surplus vaccines with far-flung allies in Africa, Europe and Latin America. The Israeli government approved the program for Palestinian workers to "maintain public health and the functioning of the economy," said COGAT, the Israeli defense body responsible for Palestinian civilian affairs. It said the program is expected to begin in the coming days. It said the vaccines would be administered by Israeli medical teams at various

checkpoints and industrial zones across the West Bank. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has moved aggressively to vaccinate Israel's population, securing deals with drug makers Pfizer and Moderna to ensure enough supplies for Israel's 9.3 million people. He expects to have the vast majority of the adult population vaccinated by the end of March. But before Sunday's announcement, Israel has shared just 2,000 vaccines with the Palestinian Authority to protect front-line medical workers in the West Bank. The Israeli program should provide some relief to the Palestinians, who have obtained just a few thousand vaccines on their own and were forced over the weekend to impose a new lockdown to control the latest coronavirus outbreak in the West Bank. Some 110,000 West Bank Palestinians have permits to work inside Israel or in the settlements. U.N. officials and human rights groups have expressed concerns over the disparity, saying Israel



FILE - In this June 30, 2020 file photo, Palestinian laborers line up to cross a checkpoint at the entrance to the Israeli settlement of Maale Adumim, near Jerusalem. On Sunday, Feb. 28, 2021, Israel announced plans to vaccinate tens of thousands of Palestinians who work inside Israel and its West Bank settlements, at a time of vast disparities in access to vaccines between the Israeli and Palestinian populations.

(AP Photo/Oded Balilty, File)

is an occupying power that is responsible for the wellbeing of the Palestinians. Israel says that under interim peace accords of the 1990s, it has no such responsibility. Israel has immunized its own Arab population, including Palestinians who live in Israeli-annexed

east Jerusalem. Netanyahu came under criticism last week when he announced that he was sharing small quantities of surplus vaccines with diplomatic allies. An Israeli TV station said the countries included Honduras, Guatemala, Chad and Mauritania. U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders said it was "outrageous that Netanyahu would use spare vaccines to reward his foreign allies while so many Palestinians in the occupied territories are still waiting." The plan was later frozen due to legal questions in Israel. □

nia. U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders said it was "outrageous that Netanyahu would use spare vaccines to reward his foreign allies while so many Palestinians in the occupied territories are still waiting." The plan was later frozen due to legal questions in Israel. □

Nigerian families await news of 300 kidnapped schoolgirls



Father Aliyu Ladan Jangebe, whose four daughters are among more than 300 girls who were abducted by gunmen on Friday from the Government Girls Junior Secondary School, waits for news in Jangebe town, Zamfara state, northern Nigeria Sunday, Feb. 28, 2021. Families in Nigeria waited anxiously on Sunday for news of their abducted daughters, the latest in a series of mass kidnappings of school students in the West African nation.

(AP Photo/Ibrahim Mansur)

JANGEBE, Nigeria (AP) — Families in Nigeria waited anxiously for news of their abducted daughters after more than 300 schoolgirls were kidnapped by gunmen from a government school in the country's north last week, the latest in a series of mass school kidnappings in the West African nation. Worried parents on Sunday gathered at the school, guarded by police. Aliyu Ladan Jangebe said his five daughters aged between 12 and 16

were at the school when the kidnappers stormed in. Four were taken away but one escaped by hiding in a bathroom with three other girls, he told The Associated Press. "We cannot imagine their situation," he said of his missing daughters. Residents of a nearby village said the kidnappers had herded the girls through the town like animals, he said. One resident said the gunmen also attacked a nearby military camp and checkpoint, preventing

soldiers from responding to the mass abduction. Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari said the government's priority is to get all the hostages returned safe and unharmed. Police and the military have begun joint operations to rescue the girls, said Mohammed Shehu, a police spokesman in Zamfara state. Pope Francis decried the kidnapping and prayed for the girls' quick release, during his public address in St. Peter's Square on Sunday. □

MedCare's Fit2Fly COVID-19 Testing Centers: Antigen & PCR-testing in the high-rise area; by walk-in and appointment. At your convenience!

PALM BEACH — MedCare's Fit2Fly COVID-19 Testing Center is your best option for the post vacation COVID-19 test which is now required by the U.S. before returning home. All passengers coming to the United States, including U.S. citizens, are required to have a negative (antigen or PCR) COVID-19 test result maximum three days prior to boarding the flight, or documentation of recovery from COVID-19. MedCare's testing centers in and close to the hotels provide you with an easy and secure solution. At this moment we are the only lab that offers the more convenient and cheaper Antigen Test!

MedCare Clinic, a high-quality medical clinic that is specialized in care for tourists and that has been appointed as the national COVID-19 clinic for tourists, and Laboratorio di Servizio, a full-service modern medical laboratory with state-of-the-art equipment, have partnered up to provide fast and reliable COVID-19 testing to all. Laboratorio di Servizio is ISO-15189:2012 accredited by the Dutch Council for Accreditation (M317).

Just steps away from you

The general Fit2Fly COVID-19 Testing Centers are located at the Cove Mall and at the Mill Resort, two locations at a stone's throw from your resort, condominium, or other vacation accommodation. Contact them to make an appointment, or just walk-in when it is convenient to you. It is recommended that the tests are done timely, as the negative test is only accepted if taken up to three days before boarding your flight. MedCare Fit2Fly Testing Center at the Cove Mall is opposite the Holiday Inn and is open every day for walk-ins from 8am through 10pm. MedCare's other location is situated at The Mill Resort, across the street from the RIU Hotel and is open every day from 8:30am until 12:30pm. Naturally, if you wish to arrange an appointment for your tests before coming to Aruba this is also possible by contacting us.



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For a selection of hotels/resorts in Aruba, MedCare has setup Testing Centers on site. The hotels/resorts at which we have a testing site are: Divi All Inclusive, Divi Dutch Village, Divi Golf, Divi Phoenix, Divi Tamarijn, Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort, Hyatt Regency, Renaissance, and the Ritz-Carlton Resort. Please contact your front desk for more information on our Testing Centers at these properties.



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Passengers must be tested with a viral test that could be either an Antigen Test or a nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT), such as the reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (PCR). The costs for the Antigen Test are only \$50, and the PCR Test is available as well, for a higher charge of \$125. At this moment, only MedCare offers the easier and substantially cheaper Antigen Test that is acceptable for travel to the U.S. as per the CDC guidelines. Pre-travel testing is not covered by the Aruban visitor insurance. Please contact your insurance company to verify if testing costs are insured. Results are e-mailed to you within 24 hours of testing.

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Papillon Restaurant presents: Chef's Garden, the butterfly effect of magnificent local food

PALM BEACH —A true once-in-a-lifetime experience is coming up. The stage: an Aruban cunucu house creating a magical ambiance. The play: *The Secret Garden*; a 6-course culinary voyage by a Michelin-trained chef from Belgium, Griet Vanbrabant. The content: local products from local farmers tuned into the most amazing dishes; leaving you in an enchanted state and giving you a memory that will last a lifetime. Be sure to reserve this opportunity before others do. This production is presented to you by Papillon Restaurant.

Sometimes combining the best of the best is a matter of all things falling into place. Every Wednesday of January, 2021, from 7p.m. to 10p.m. you are welcomed to enter a world where food is a passion. Papillon Restaurant presents their guest chef, Vanbrabant - who will be on the island for a limited time period - and with *The Secret Garden* menu being a fresh concept on the island, we're sure you will fall completely in love with this.

A bit about Griet

Vanbrabant is a passionate chef with over 15 years of experience in fine dining menu development, culinary staff management, food preparation and creative recipe design. She is educated in classic French Cuisine and Modern Gastronomy teachings throughout her international career in Michelin star and the World's 50 Best restaurants such as El Bulli and Comerc 24 in Barcelona, Pujol in Mexico City, Rockpool in Australia. Let her entice you with her succulent, Aruban recipes like they've never tasted before.

The menu is carefully done with local products,



fresh and perfectly matched with a selection of wines by local sommeliers. Diet options are available; please inform them when you make your reservation.

The Secret Garden & Papillon

This is an in-home dining experience where you will feel you are part of an exclusive setting. Private culinary events are the owner's specialty and their lush, tropical garden is also inviting for you to relax and indulge in hours of authentic culinarian delights, a heaven to foodies. For more than a decade, Papillon restaurant has built a reputation with the fusion of classic

French cuisine, Dutch and Caribbean flavors. They know how to thrill and in collaboration with *The Secret Garden* we can only expect phenomenal.

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Origin of Papiamentu- Aruba's native language

ORANJESTAD — Papiamentu, Creole language of ABC (Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao) is from the Cape Verdean Creole family (Cape Verdean language) and was taken to the Caribbean in the 9th century by the Cape Verdeans of that time (linings and slaves), experts in cane culture and sugar production, and who were hired by Jewish entrepreneurs who went to invest in this business in the Caribbean. Cape Verdeans taught this pre-industrial revolution technology (planting cane and producing sugar, which they had learned from Madeirans) to slaves from other African regions, and did so in their language, Cape Verde Creole (Cape Verdean language), hence the language implanted in Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao.

Unlike many interesting stories, wanting to link Papiamentu directly to Portuguese, Galician or Castilian (see Papiamentu, on Wikipedia - Portuguese version and Spanish version, where



the Portuguese and Spanish, each claim the direct origin of Papiamentu), in fact, this is not true. Papiamentu is not direct from Portuguese, Galician or Castilian, it is from the Cape Verde Creole family (Cape Verdean language). You can see this best when it's

saying obscene words and offending someone, precisely as they say today in both ABC and Cape Verde islands. The obscene words kept the original, had no lexical influence either from Castilian or Dutch. Also the Papi Cristang of Malacca, the Patuá of Macau, and

several creoles from the east (from Daman, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Philippines, Indonesia) and Africa (Casamança, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone and Nigeria, these last two releases to the English), all originated in the Creole of Cabo Verde (Cape Verdean language), which was the French language spoken in Portuguese feitories on the coast of Africa (from Senegal to Sierra Leone), and which was taken east by the thousands of cable-Verdeans (linings and slaves, already Christianized and speaking Creole) who served as sailors and "slaves of arms" in Portuguese caravels, demanding the east. I don't know why the official history of Portugal usually omits this fact, which is in the chronicles of the quinrentist chroniclers, but which we never saw in the history of Portugal that we study from primary education to higher education. However, it has always been tried to deceive us, in colonial

time, that we were descendants of Viriato (Iberian hero in the fight against the Romans) and the pastors of the Hermeni Mountains, but not much speaking of our black-African ancestry.

We Cape Verdeans understand each other very well with these Antillans and Easterns, whose language is from the same Creole family of Cape Verde (Cape Verdean language), speaking their Creole and we ours. Therefore, Papiamentu, Papi Cristang, Patuá Macaense and the creoles, said of Portuguese origin, Daman, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, some locations in the Philippines and some places in Indonesia, are creoles of the language family Cape Verde Creole (Cape Verdean language) and indirectly the Galaico-Duriense or Galaico-Portuguese, a language that the people spoke in Portugal in the 6th and 7th century.

Anonymous

Source: Dushi Aruba

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Fraud overwhelms pandemic-related unemployment programs

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) —

With the floodgates set to open on another round of unemployment aid, states are being hammered with a new wave of fraud as they scramble to update security systems and block scammers who already have siphoned billions of dollars from pandemic-related jobless programs.

The fraud is fleecing taxpayers, delaying legitimate payments and turning thousands of Americans into unwitting identity theft victims. Many states have failed to adequately safeguard their systems, and a review by The Associated Press finds that some will not even publicly acknowledge the extent of the problem. The massive sham springs from prior identity theft from banks, credit rating agencies, health care systems and retailers. Fraud perpetrators, sometimes in China, Nigeria or Russia, buy stolen personal identifying information on the dark web and use it to flood state unemployment systems with bogus claims.

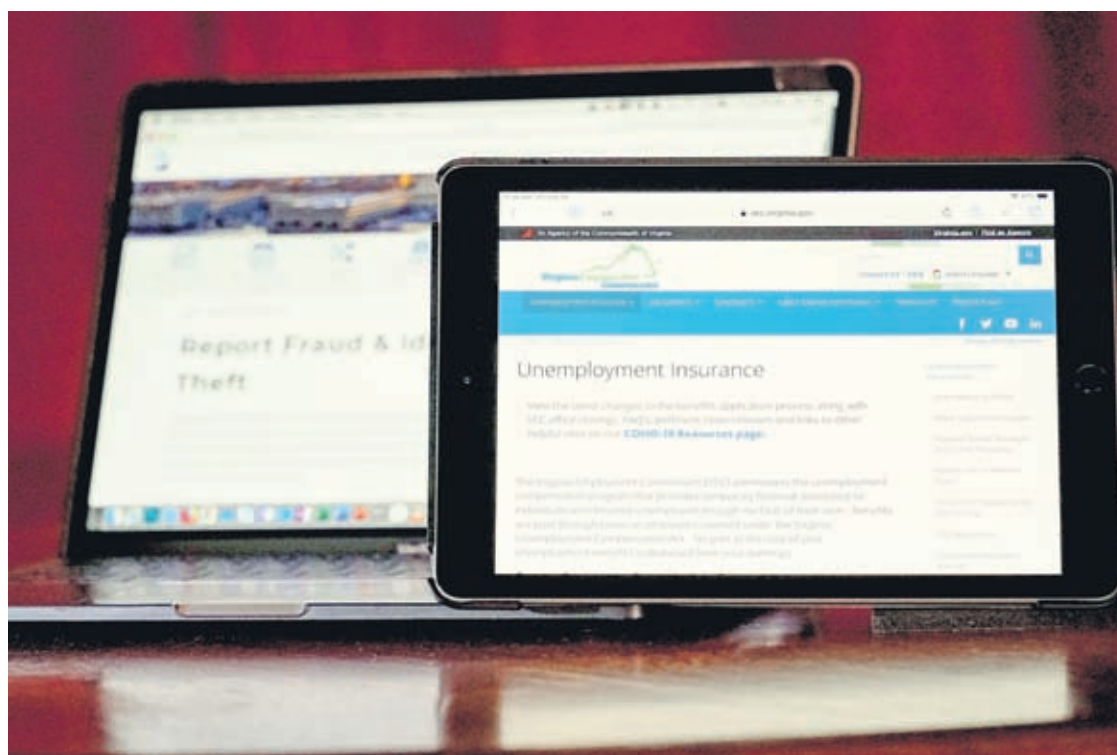
The U.S. Justice Department is investigating unemployment fraud by "transnational criminal organizations, sophisticated domestic actors, and individuals across the United States," said Joshua Stueve, a spokesman for the department's criminal division.

The Labor Department inspector general's office estimates that more than \$63 billion has been paid out improperly through fraud or errors — roughly 10% of the total amount paid under coronavirus pandemic-related unemployment programs since March.

"We're all learning that there is an epidemic of fraud," said U.S. Rep. Kevin Brady of Texas, the ranking Republican on the House's powerful Ways and Means Committee. Brady said the \$63 billion estimate "is larger than the entire budget of the Department of Homeland Security."

"These are frightening levels of fraud," he said.

California has been the biggest target, with an estimated \$11 billion in



Web pages used to show information for collecting unemployment insurance in Virginia, right, and reporting fraud and identity theft in Pennsylvania, are displayed on the respective state web pages, Friday, Feb. 26, 2021, in Zelienople, Pa. Massive fraud in the nation's unemployment system is raising alarms even as President Joe Biden and Congress prepare to pour hundreds of billions more into expanded benefits for those left jobless by the coronavirus pandemic.

(AP Photo/Kelvin S. Coomer)

fraudulent payments and an additional \$19 billion in suspect accounts. Colorado has paid out nearly as much to scammers — an estimated \$6.5 billion — as it has to people who filed legitimate unemployment claims.

Other estimates, according to AP reporting across the states, range from several hundred thousand dollars in smaller states such as Alaska and Wyoming to hundreds of millions in more populous states such as Massachusetts and Ohio.

The nationwide fraud has fed on twin vulnerabilities: a flood of jobless benefit applications since the pandemic began that has overwhelmed state unemployment agencies and antiquated benefit systems that are easy prey for crafty and persistent criminals.

In Ohio, weekly first-time unemployment claims have ranged from 17,000 to more than 40,000 during the pandemic. But since late last month, those claims have topped more than 140,000 some weeks, with many of them believed to be fraudulent. The state has paid at least \$330 million in fraudulent pandemic unemployment benefit claims.

Trying to catch so many bogus claims delays pay-

outs to Ohioans who are legitimately in need of help. In the Columbus suburb of Upper Arlington, Cynthia Sbertoli was receiving \$228 a week after she was laid off in March from her job with a nonprofit that runs high school student exchange programs.

Her benefits were put on hold in January after she informed the state that someone had tried to use her identity in a scam to claim benefits. She thought the problem was resolved but has yet to see a renewal of her benefit checks, which she and her husband use to help pay for a son's vision and auditory therapy. "It's just not a good way to take care of people," said Sbertoli, 49.

In Indiana, Kentucky and Maryland, officials have said that for certain weeks in the new year at least two-thirds of the claims they received were classified as suspicious due to problems verifying identities. It's not the first brush with serious fraud for Maryland. In July, officials said they'd discovered a massive criminal enterprise that had stolen more than \$500 million in unemployment benefits.

Among states that have been hardest hit are those participating in the Pan-

demic Unemployment Assistance program adopted by Congress last year. It has been a lifeline for out-of-work freelancers and gig workers who normally don't qualify for unemployment insurance, but it's also been a boon for criminals who use stolen identities to make claims. Nearly 800,000 of the 1.4 million claims Ohio has received through this program have been tagged for potential fraud.

Scams have been so widespread that the U.S. Department of Justice is setting aside money to hire more prosecutors. In New York alone, the Department of Labor says it has referred "hundreds of thousands of fraud cases" to federal prosecutors. The state says it has blocked \$5.5 billion in fraudulent claims, while New Jersey says it's prevented \$2.5 billion from flowing into the hands of criminals.

Despite those efforts, a government watchdog agency says not enough states are taking the necessary steps to prevent fraud. In its memo this past week, the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General said that by the end of last year, 22 of the 54 state and territorial work-

force agencies were still not following its repeated recommendation to join a data exchange run by the National Association of State Workforce Agencies. That system is designed to check Social Security numbers used in claims to see if they are being used in multiple states, or are linked to dead people or other scam methods. The office said it had found \$5.4 billion in fraudulent payments from March through October.

The biggest chunk of that, \$3.5 billion, came through claims that used the same Social Security numbers in multiple states. One number was used on claims in 40 states. Twenty-nine of the states paid those claims, totaling more than \$220,000.

"The Department needs to take immediate action and increase its efforts to ensure (states) implement effective controls to mitigate fraud in these high risk areas," the inspector general warned Labor officials. The people whose identities are used to claim improper benefits often don't find out until they receive their tax statements.

Andrew Heidtke received a letter in September from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development notifying him that unemployment claims he never applied for were being processed. Another victim was 99-year-old Harry Hollingsworth of Strongsville, Ohio. The retired elevator car factory worker received a form in late January showing he had received \$3,156 in benefits. Hollingsworth died recently, and his son, Jim Hollingsworth, said the bogus claim created a big hassle.

"It looks like the state, they dropped the ball on this completely," he said.

In its own survey of state governments, the AP found that many are not publicly disclosing the level of fraud. Some officials expressed concern that providing any information, no matter how general, could provide criminals an opening to exploit their systems further. □

Biden administration promises focus on environmental justice

(AP) — When President Joe Biden made environmental protection a key element of his campaign, he promised to overhaul the federal office that investigates complaints from people in minority communities who believe they have been unfairly harmed by industrial pollution or waste disposal.

Although the Environmental Protection Agency acknowledges that disadvantaged communities in America are disproportionately affected by pollution, hundreds of complaints sent to its civil rights office since the mid-1990s have only once resulted in a formal finding of discrimination.

The situation has provoked criticism from the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, the EPA's own Office of Inspector General and citizens who have filed complaints that sometimes languished for years — or decades.

Under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, states, cities and other entities that receive federal funds are prohibited from discriminating because of race, color or national origin.

That means citizens bearing the brunt of industrial pollution can bring a complaint if federal money is tied to the project.

In Uniontown, Alabama — a mainly Black town of 2,200 — residents complained to the EPA in 2013 about the Alabama Department of Environmental Management's oversight of a huge landfill containing 4 million tons of coal ash that residents blame for respiratory, kidney and other ailments.

Five years later, the EPA dismissed the complaint, saying residents hadn't proven the landfill caused their health problems.

The U.S. Civil Rights Commission called the dismissal of the Uniontown complaint "another distressing step in the wrong direction" by the EPA office.

The outcome was typical. In three decades of fielding complaints, EPA's civil rights office has almost never found pollution was



This Monday, Feb. 22, 2021 photo shows Latoya Gipson's house on Perry County Road 1 in Uniontown, Ala. Disadvantaged communities in America are disproportionately affected by pollution from industry or waste disposal, but their complaints have few outlets and often reach a dead end. Hundreds of discrimination claims sent to the Environmental Protection Agency's civil rights office since the mid-90s have only once resulted in a formal finding of discrimination. And some cases languished for years — or decades.

(AP Photo/Vasha Hunt)

adversely affecting human health. And without such a finding, the agency won't even consider whether illegal discrimination occurred.

Marianne Engleman-Lado, who was recently appointed by the Biden administration to the EPA's office of general counsel, had helped Uniontown residents with their case.

She maintains the way the EPA evaluates such complaints makes it nearly impossible to prevail because proving with scientific certainty that pollution is causing disease is a nearly insurmountable obstacle.

Ben Eaton, a Perry County Commissioner involved in the Uniontown complaint, said attorneys warned that discrimination claims usually go nowhere, but residents felt their evidence — including photos and videos — was compelling. "What's the use of having these agencies," he said, "if they're not going to do the job?"

Residents of a predominantly Black and Latino community in Oakland, California were similarly disappointed with results of their civil rights complaint over air pollution from ships and truck traffic at the busy

Port of Oakland.

Margaret Gordon, a co-founder of the West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project, said her group did not have a seat at the table when EPA hammered out an informal resolution with the port.

Air pollution is still a problem, she said, although port officials are now more willing to listen to community members.

Lilian Sotolongo Dorka, who heads the EPA's office of external civil rights enforcement, touted the 2019 Oakland resolution as an "extremely effective" example of the difference her office is making in people's lives. But Richard Grow, who worked at EPA for 40 years before retiring in 2019 and was one of the agency's negotiators, agrees with Gordon's assessment.

"We put forth a number of very practical ... solutions and recommendations and they just said 'No,'" Grow said. When he reported the port's and city's position to Dorka's office, he said he was told nothing could be done.

The office had no further comment, and the port issued a statement saying it is committed to continuing a dialogue with the com-

munity.

The EPA has the power to withdraw funding from groups that discriminate, although it has never used that power. Dorka defends her office's record, saying it has eliminated a chronic backlog of complaints.

"I disagree very significantly with the conclusion that you can judge our civil rights program by the number of formal findings (of discrimination) we've made," she said, noting the office is required by regulation to seek informal resolutions wherever possible.

U.S. Sen. Cory Booker (D-New Jersey) is among those who think EPA's civil rights office should do more.

During confirmation hearings this month for Michael Regan, Biden's nominee for EPA administrator, Booker spoke of meeting Alabama citizens suffering from tropical diseases they attribute to sewage pollution, children with elevated lead levels in his own state, and families in Louisiana's so-called "cancer alley" who felt abandoned by their government.

The EPA's civil rights office "has been eviscerated over the years," the African-American senator told Regan.

"You're not even equipped, in my opinion, to actually begin to fight against these issues that affect millions of Americans."

Regan promised to make environmental justice a top priority, including "restructuring and reorganizing" the office of civil rights, which has 12 fulltime employees. "We will need additional resources. ..." he said.

Critics concede that Dorka, who took over the office of external civil rights under President Barack Obama, has made some progress, including producing a case resolution manual to guide investigations.

Obama's last day in office marked the only time Dorka's office issued a formal finding of discrimination — in a complaint filed 25 years earlier over the Genesee Power Plant outside Flint, Michigan.

The agency dismissed allegations that the plant's emissions hurt Black residents, finding insufficient evidence of harm to their health.

However, the EPA did find residents were not given a fair opportunity to participate in the permitting process.

Dorka said progress has continued under the Trump administration.

EPA spokeswoman Lindsay Hamilton said that "The new leadership team will be working closely with career colleagues ... as well as receiving input from stakeholder groups, in an effort to bolster the agency's capabilities to deliver on our environmental justice and civil rights missions."

Environmental justice advocates say the changes need to be significant.

"There are still places where people don't have access to safe drinking water, where they live in close proximity to hazardous sources," said Vernice Miller-Travis, a longtime advocate and cofounder of WE ACT for Environmental Justice. "This could be a moment of real sea change in terms of how the EPA is not just paying lip service to civil rights." □

Spacewalking astronauts prep station for new solar wings



In this image taken from NASA video, NASA astronauts Kate Rubins, top, and Victor Glover work outside the International Space Station Sunday, Feb. 28, 2021. The spacewalking astronauts ventured out Sunday to install support frames for new, high-efficiency solar panels arriving at the International Space Station later this year.

(NASA via AP)

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Spacewalking astronauts ventured out Sunday to install support frames for new, high-efficiency solar panels arriving at the International Space Station later this year.

NASA's Kate Rubins and Victor Glover put the first set of mounting brackets and struts together, then bolted them into place next to the station's oldest and most degraded solar wings. But the work took

longer than expected, and they barely got started on the second set before calling it quits.

Rubins will finish the job during a second spacewalk later this week.

The spacewalkers had to lug out the hundreds of pounds of mounting brackets and struts in 8-foot (2.5-meter) duffle-style bags. The equipment was so big and awkward that it had to be taken apart like furniture, just to get through the hatch.

The astronauts had to use a ratchet wrench to deal with the more stubborn

bolts, which slowed them down. At one point, they were two hours behind. □

Casa del Mar 2BR/2B

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Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

9		8	3		7	4		2
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5	4							6
		9		3		1		
6							2	7
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Difficulty Level ★

3/01

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Borsalino looks ahead with cool bucket hats, baseball caps

MILAN (AP) — The fedora Humphrey Bogart wore in “Casablanca” may have secured Borsalino’s place in fashion and cinematic history, but it will be something like the cow-print bucket hat that will help ensure its future.

The storied Italian hatmaker still makes its felt hats by hand in a Piedmont region factory, using the same artisanal techniques from when the company was founded in 1857 and some of founder Giuseppe Borsalino’s original machinery. It is updating its offerings for next fall and winter, with a focus on customization and youth-trends.

The new collection displayed during Milan Fashion Week takes inspiration from the Arts & Crafts design movement in mid-19th century Britain. Hat pins with leaf and floral motifs allow women to uniquely shape the hats, to take up an oversized brim, say, or to create an elegant fold in the crown.

A leopard fedora can be paired with a long chain, to wear over the shoulder when going in and out of shops, while a clochard has



A girl wears a creation as part of the Borsalino women’s Fall Winter 2021-22 collection, unveiled during the Fashion Week in Milan, Italy, Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2021.

(AP Photo/Antonio Calanni)

an optional leather corset. “You cannot change a hat so much,” Giacomo Santucci, Borsalino’s creative curator, said. “You can change the attitude of the hat.”

Unisex styles, including baseball caps, berets and bucket hats, come in updated new materials - including a spotted cow print, black patent leather and rainproof nylon. Such

genderless looks are becoming an increasingly important part of the collection, Santucci said. “The hat is no longer a tool to cover yourself, but to discover yourself,” he told The Associated Press.

The company, which relaunched three years ago, was in the process of scaling up production from 150,000 hats a year to a goal of half a million when

the pandemic hit. “To be honest, it is such a small company, in a way it is very simple to react,” said Santucci, who is also the current president of the Italian Chamber of Buyers. “The smaller you are, the more reactive and prompt.”

Beyond new styles, that means getting people talking. Santucci, who was Gucci CEO during the Tom

Ford era, created a new film for this season, featuring Milanese women who chose hats to match their styles, striding through the center of the city. Last season’s film featured dancers from Alessandria, site of the original Borsalino factory, dancing through the factory floor.

“My strong belief is that fashion is becoming more and more a discussion,” Santucci said.

New social media platforms like Clubhouse are giving people the chance to create a limited and select group to discuss relevant topics, which Santucci said has been key during the isolation imposed by the pandemic.

He also has pursued collaborations with ready-to-wear brands, including Borsalino X Valentino.

“Brands are changing. It is getting closer to entertainment, to give people the chance to engage with the brand, to understand it better. Not only to understand what was done in the past, but to really interact and to have the chance to be part of the same community,” Santucci said. □

New Orleans Museum of Art announces 3 big gifts in 1 month

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The New Orleans Museum of Art has announced a major gift to its photography department - the third such announcement this month. Collectors Cherye R. and James F. Pierce have given the museum more than 260 important photographs, a news release Thursday said. They include a print of Robert Capa’s “The Falling Soldier,” taken in 1936 during the Spanish Civil War, and the 1932 photograph titled “Behind the Gare St. Lazare,” which many consider Henri Cartier-Bresson’s best work. Another print of that Cartier-Bresson photograph sold at a London auction in 2017 for £131,000 (about \$170,300), according to the Phillips Auctioneers website.

Others range from vintage prints by Ansel Adams to contemporary work by



This photo provided by the New Orleans Museum of Art shows “Peking University, Beijing, China,” 1991, by Lois Conner. The print is a gift from Cherye R. and James F. Pierce to the museum. (Courtesy of New Orleans Museum of Art via AP)

William Eggleston. There also are platinum prints by contemporary photographer Lois Conner by Frederick Evans, who was born in 1853 and retired in 1915 because platinum cost so much, and by Mexican photographer Manuel Alvarez-Bravo, from whom the Pierces commissioned work.

“Cherye and Jim were pio-

neers in the collecting of photography” said Susan Taylor, the museum’s director. “Their prescient decision to collect and their dedication to the medium will have a profound impact on the museum’s ability to share a fuller history of photography with our public.”

The couple has promised another 300 works in the fu-

ture, the museum said. Earlier this month, the New Orleans Museum of Art announced a major fund and pledged endowment from Del and Ginger Hall of Chicago. The fund will support and augment photographic exhibitions and programs over the next five years. The museum said the endowment will help provide a firm foundation for the de-

partment’s activities from now on.

“Del and Ginger’s incredible generosity will help grow what is already one of NOMA’s greatest strengths: our photography program,” Taylor said Feb. 11. And on Feb. 4, it announced that radiologist and art collector Russell Albright had willed the museum nearly 400 works including more than 350 photographs. He also left a fund for the photography department. □

9	5	8	3	6	7	4	1	2
3	6	4	1	9	2	5	7	8
2	7	1	8	5	4	9	6	3
5	4	2	7	1	8	3	9	6
7	8	9	2	3	6	1	5	4
6	1	3	9	4	5	8	2	7
1	9	6	4	2	3	7	8	5
8	3	5	6	7	9	2	4	1
4	2	7	5	8	1	6	3	9

Bale scores 2 as Tottenham routs Burnley in Premier League

LONDON (AP) — Gareth Bale scored twice to lift Tottenham to a 4-0 rout of Burnley on Sunday in a morale-boosting victory for a Tottenham team that had lost five of its previous six Premier League games.



Chelsea's Hakim Ziyech, left, and Manchester United's Luke Shaw challenge for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between Chelsea and Manchester United at Stamford Bridge Stadium in London, England, Sunday, Feb. 28, 2021.

(AP Photo/Ian Walton, Pool)

Draw at Chelsea a sign that United title bid has fallen away

LONDON (AP) — An unexpected but burgeoning title challenge for Manchester United has fallen apart in just a few weeks.

A 0-0 draw with Chelsea on Sunday was the fifth time United has been held in the nine Premier League matches since Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side went top 47 days earlier.

There have also only been three wins since the Jan. 12 victory over Burnley that gave United a glimmer of hope of lifting the trophy for the first time since 2013, allowing Manchester City to take control.

United remains second in the standings, but City has now been able to extend its lead to 12 points after beating West Ham on Saturday.

It is fourth-place West Ham in Chelsea's sights. Drawing a blank in a drab encounter against United kept the west London club unbeaten in the two months under Thomas Tuchel but it remained a point behind West Ham in the pursuit of Champions League qualification. □

Bale gave Tottenham the lead after just 68 seconds, knocking in a cross from Son Heung-min after defender James Tarkowski missed a chance to intercept.

Bale played in Harry Kane to make it 2-0 in the 15th minute and Tottenham was cruising when Lucas Moura added a third goal off Sergio Reguilon's cross.

Bale scored his second in the 55th when Son spotted the Welsh forward had been left completely alone by the Burnley defense on the right flank. Bale took one touch to control the ball and another to curl it with his left foot past goalkeeper Nick Pope.

"The most important thing is we knew we've not been on a great run and it was important to get back to winning ways," Bale told

the BBC. "It's not just about scoring. It's about our all-round play and helping the team. I'm delighted with the goals and the assist and whatever I can do for the team."

It was the sort of performance Tottenham fans had hoped for when Bale was signed back from Madrid on a season-long loan in September. Instead, they had to watch as he was hampered by injuries and played mostly in the cup competitions, with Sunday marking only the third time he had started in the Premier League this season.

After Bale was substituted in the 70th, Pope stopped Tottenham from scoring a fifth, scooping one powerful shot from Kane over the bar and palming another from Son around the post.



Tottenham's Gareth Bale celebrates after scoring his side's fourth goal during an English Premier League soccer match between Tottenham Hotspur and Burnley at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London, England, Sunday, Feb. 28, 2021.

(Daniel Leal Olivas/Pool via AP)

Kane missed from close range in stoppage time.

Tottenham moved above Aston Villa to eighth with the win, the team's biggest margin of victory in the Premier League since beating

Manchester United 6-1 in October.

Burnley is 15th, five points above the relegation zone, and with one win from its last eight league and cup games. □

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Denver Nuggets guard PJ Dozier (35) shoots between Oklahoma City Thunder center Mike Muscala (33), guard Ty Jerome (16) and guard Theo Maledon (11) during the second half of an NBA basketball game Saturday, Feb. 27, 2021, in Oklahoma City.

(AP Photo/Sue Ogrocki)

Jamal Murray, Nikola Jokic help Nuggets rout Thunder 126-96

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Jamal Murray continued his hot scoring with 26 points and Nikola Jokic had his eighth triple-double of the season to help the Denver Nuggets rout the Oklahoma City Thunder 126-96 on Saturday night.

Murray, averaging 30.1 points in his previous seven games, made 9 of 15 field goals and Denver shot 55%.

Jokic had 19 points, 11 rebounds and 13 assists. Michael Porter Jr. added 20 points and 10 rebounds, and Will Barton scored 15 points.

Darius Bazley had 22 points for the Thunder. Ty Jerome and Isaiah Roby added 15 each.

Denver, loser of four of its past six games and six of seven on the road, controlled this one from the outset in beating the Thunder for the third time in three tries this season.

"I felt tonight was Denver Nuggets basketball," coach Michael Malone said. "We played for each other. I told the guys, we have to get back to being a team that's hard to guard."

Oklahoma City had no answers. Porter, who had an 18-10 double-double in a home loss to Washington on Thursday night, made all four of his 3-point shots in the first quarter and scored 14 points as the Nuggets led by as many as 23.

The two-point loss to Washington was painful, as the Nuggets had a 4-on-1 breakaway opportunity in the final seconds but settled for a 3-pointer that missed badly.

"It just shows what kind of team we can be when we're locked in and focused and all on the same page," Barton said. Jokic said that in the NBA, "you need to forget things really quick. The next one is coming so fast you can't think about it." The Thunder's second unit, led by Jerome and Roby, helped cut the deficit to 47-36 midway through the second quarter. But the Nuggets ended the half on an 18-7 run, including 3-pointers by Porter and Murray, and held the Thunder to one basket in the final 3:45.

"We got off to a rough start, but it's a long game," Bazley said. "Defensively we were just trying to figure it out."

That didn't happen. Jokic scored nine of his points in the third quarter when Denver pushed the lead beyond 30, which allowed Jokic, Murray and the other starters to take it easy the rest of the way.

"I think we moved the ball really well, we were finding open shots, we were making the shots," Jokic said. "We had some flow in our offense, so it was really easy to play when you play like that." □

Faivre wins GS for his first World Cup victory in 4 years



France's Mathieu Faivre reacts in the finish area of an alpine ski, men's World Cup giant slalom, in Bansko, Sunday, Feb. 28, 2021. (AP Photo/Marco Tacca)

BANSKO, Bulgaria (AP) — Mathieu Faivre won a World Cup race for the first time in more than four years on Sunday, earning a pat on his back from French teammate Alexis Pinturault.

Faivre's win came nine days after he took a surprise gold medal in giant slalom at the world championships. Pinturault was favorite in that race but skied out early in his final run, handing the victory to Faivre.

In Sunday's GS, Faivre was simply faster than Pinturault in two runs on the Banderiza course.

Building on a big first-run lead, Faivre finished 0.75 seconds ahead of Marco Odermatt of Switzerland, who improved from sixth position.

Pinturault came 0.06 further back in third. Thibaut Favrot was 1.08 behind and was the third French skier in the top four.

Faivre also won gold in the parallel event at the worlds but had not triumphed in a World Cup race since his only previous win in Val d'Isère, France, in December 2016.

He came close in Saturday's GS, when he also

posted the fastest time in the opening leg before losing his advantage to Filip Zubcic of Croatia in the final run.

Faivre avoided a similar scenario on Sunday and added three-tenths of a second to his lead.

This time Zubcic couldn't threaten his victory. The Croatian skier slid away on his inside ski in a left turn and finished more than three second off the lead after the opening run, though he still finished 14th following an outstanding final run.

The result reduced Zubcic's chances in the battle for the season-long giant slalom title.

With two races remaining, Pinturault leads Odermatt by 25 points, with Zubcic 64 behind in third.

Pinturault and Odermatt are also 1-2 in the overall standings.

The men's World Cup moves to Saalbach-Hinterglemm, Austria, for three speed races from Friday through Sunday.

The events were rescheduled from Kvitfjell in response to anti-coronavirus measures from the Norwegian government. □